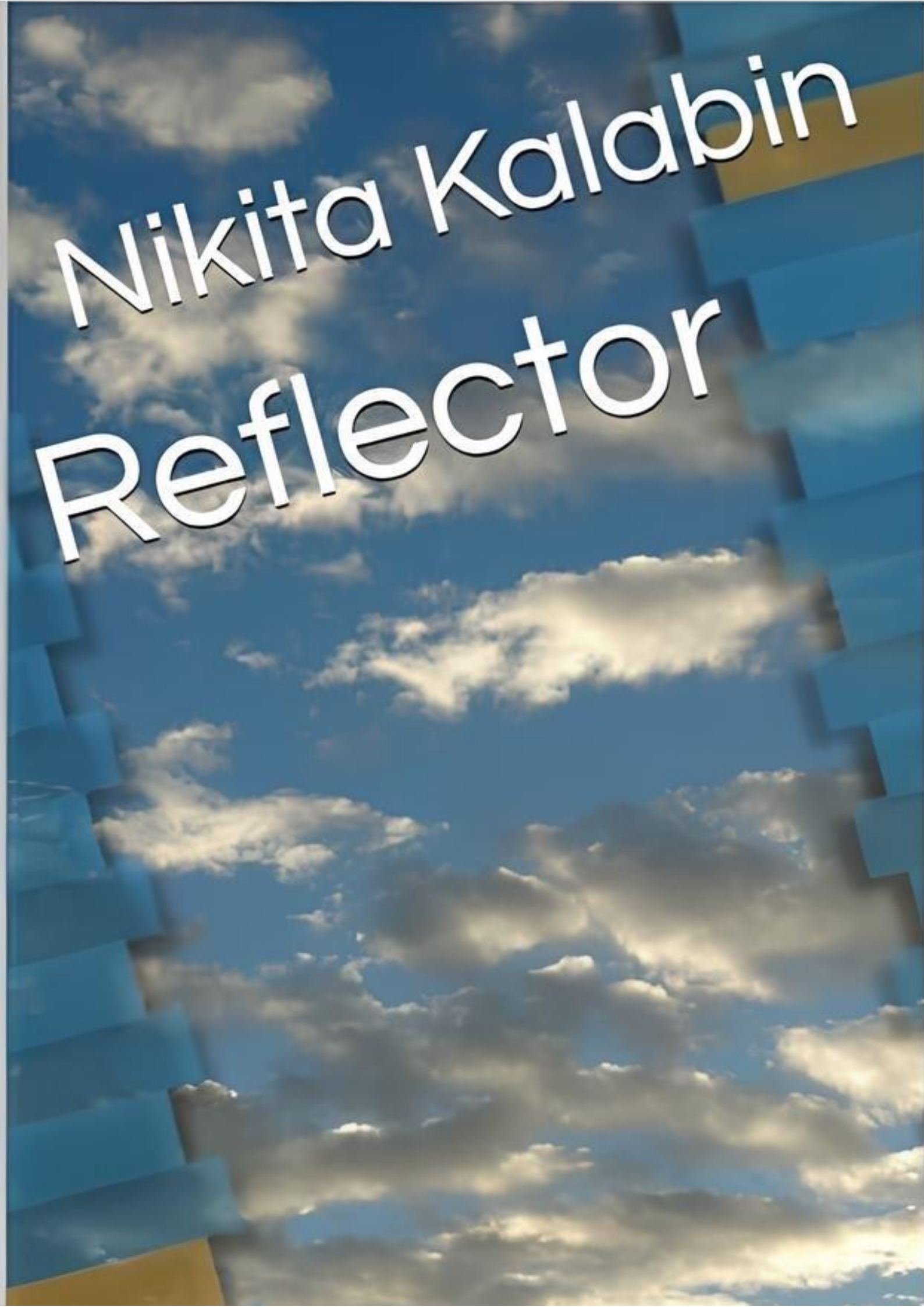
Nikita Kalabin
Reflector

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Kirill and Stanislav were sitting in a restaurant. The friends were chatting peacefully, it was their usual pre-New Year feast. Gathering in a restaurant before the New Year had quietly become a tradition for them. Kirill was tall, fit, with a short haircut and a penetrating look. Stanislav, on the contrary, was more rounded, with a massive neck and a quiet voice. They were different in some ways, the same in others, but their friendship was strong and time-tested.

Kirill leaned back in his soft chair, inhaling with pleasure the rich aroma of spruce and tangerines, generously poured into the air. The large restaurant was buzzing like a disturbed beehive. Before the New Year, a special atmosphere reigned here: laughter, toasts, the clink of glasses, snatches of songs — everything mixed into a single festive noise. At the next table, an excited company was celebrating a "corporate party ", a little further, judging by the huge cake, they were honoring the birthday boy.

Against the backdrop of this general joy, Kirill and Stas looked like an island of calm, sitting opposite each other and chatting peacefully, like two old oaks rooted in one place. It was not their first time in this restaurant, and having ordered their favorite dishes, they simply talked.

— So what Spanish have you learned? When are you going to Barcelona? – Stas chuckled, taking a sip of wine.

— Leave Barcelona alone, – Kirill answered with feigned sadness.

— What changed your mind?

— The situation is changing. Real estate prices there have skyrocketed. Tourists have started to be oppressed.

— The crisis there hasn't really ended since 2008. They can't fix the economy.

— The crisis is not the main thing here. Prices have jumped all along the Mediterranean coast. Accordingly, someone is buying up residential buildings.

— They were always bought there. So what, now the locals have nowhere to live?

— You see, capitalism is already imperfect, to put it mildly. And now it has become so distorted, on top of everything else. This "mess" with bitcoin alone is worth it. Imagine a person bought it, once for one dollar, for a hundred dollars, spent three thousand, and now sold it for ten million dollars, and got eight hundred million rubles. How long does it take the average person to earn a million? Three, five years?

— For some people, even five will not be enough.

— So it turns out that eight hundred slaves worked for him for free for five years, and now he has come for the products of their production, to a separate territory.

— To Barcelona?

— And Valencia.

— You're going too far with the slaves.

— I simply said that, the man did not produce any manufactured goods, and received enormous funds to purchase them.

— Is Bitcoin to blame for everything?

— No, the whole system. The modern capitalist no longer needs to hang around in the factory and control, electronic systems do this. The financier does not need to be in the office, at the computer, because all account management is on the smartphone. The real sector of the economy is not growing in Europe, because the capitalist is more attracted to speculation on the stock market.

— How complicated everything is.

— Do you want me to answer more simply?

— Yeah.

— I won't go to Barcelona because it's hot there.

— Now that's a different matter.

A slow melody started playing, the sliding illumination turned on and the dance floor emptied.

— A beautiful girl is walking towards us, – Stas said quietly, looking at his plate.

— She wants to invite me to dance, – Kirill answered without turning around.

— You daydreaming.

The girl slowly approached their table, looked at Kirill, smiled and firmly said:

— May I invite you?

— I'll be happy to allow it, – Kirill jumped up from his chair, watching Stas's wide eyes.

After the dance, having seen the girl off, Kirill plopped down in a chair.

— What is her name? – Stas asked, frowning.

— Who, a girl?

— No, you.

— Her name is Nastya.

— Did you guess what she would invite, or is this your trick again? – Stanislav asked suspiciously.

— You guessed it, tricks again, – Kirill joked. In general, she fell for the voice, at the entrance, when we were hanging around in the hall. She heard my voice, turned around, noticed, began to pay attention.

— Do you mean that you have an irresistible voice?

— Ordinary.

— Why didn't she fall for my voice?

— Would you like that?

— Maybe.

— She heard something of her own in my voice. Maybe the voice of her “former”, maybe “future”, maybe a relative, or maybe a distant ancestor.

— As for the distant ancestor, where could she have heard him?

— It's in the genes.

— Again, it's very complicated. And what did she say?

— That I haven’t met such strong men for a long time.

— Are you strong? – Stas asked with mock seriousness.

— Stasik, she saw what is in her subconscious.

Two stocky men approached their table. One of them, especially stocky, with huge fists, greeted Kirill:

— Hi, Kirill, how are you?

— Hi, Volodya, things are going well. Are you having a good time? Come sit down and let's chat.

After shaking hands, the men sat down at the table.

— Do you still play sports?

— Yes. There's a gym not far from here. I work there as a trainer from time to time. Come on over.

— No thanks. Maybe later, I have a lot to do now.

Then two more people sat down at the table with them, and it became a big, noisy company. It was fun, they were making toasts, joking, laughing. Only one man, whose name was Sergey, was behaving strangely, he was looking at Kirill with apprehension, as if he had stolen something.

— Let’s go outside, – he said to Kirill.

— Why? – Kirill asked with interest.

The man did not answer, but only continued to fidget restlessly in his chair. A few minutes later, he again addressed Kirill with the same question. This time, Kirill silently stood up and went to the exit. They went out into the vestibule, where Sergey stood near the wall and began to smile silently and tensely.

— Why did we go out? – Kirill asked calmly.

Sergey just stood there silently, looking around. A large man in a white shirt came out into the vestibule and simply settled down in the corner, watching what was happening. Kirill silently looked at Sergey, who was turning his head in different directions, and then Stas and Volodya came in.

— Let's go, what are you doing here?

Stas pulled Kirill into the restaurant, and Volodya took care of Sergei.

— What did he need? – Stas asked when the friends sat down at the empty table.

— He himself does not understand it. He just stood there and was silent. Perhaps he feels anger, irritation or fear and unconsciously connected it with me. In fact, he simply saw himself in the "mirror" and did not like himself very much.

A stately man with impressive gray hair and a keen gaze approached their table.

— Hello! May I come in? – he said, sitting down at the table. Kirill recognized this man as a relative of his friends named Alexander Alexandrovich, whom he hardly knew. After shaking hands and introducing himself, the man turned to Kirill, moved his chair close and said:

— Are you celebrating something?

— We celebrate our meeting, – Kirill answered.

— Your friend?

— Friend.

— I had a friend too. A real friend. He helped me out a lot once. Everyone was very afraid of him, he always moved forward without turning back, and that's what destroyed him. I couldn't help him, I wasn't there then. You're just like him, exactly the same. Now I have this feeling that it's him in front of me. Such similarities do happen.

— Were you similar to him in everything?

— No, I'm not like that. Nobody knows how many times I turned, — Alexander lowered his voice.

— Did the instinct of self-preservation kick in? That's normal.

— Yes, it worked. But you are different! I mean, he was different. He was. – Alexander thought for a moment. — By the way, they told me that this "cormorant" in a black cardigan has questions for you? One word from you and ..., just say it.

— No! This man already has big problems — he doesn’t respect himself.

— Well, let's crush such people. If he doesn't respect himself, then he doesn't respect us either.

— Enough for this poor guy. And do you feel guilty that you couldn't help your friend?

— I told you I wasn't there. I was physically very far away.

— So, objectively, you didn’t have the opportunity to help him?

— Objectively.

— And the feeling of guilt still remains?

— Maybe somewhere deep in the soul.

— Why?

— But he still helped me!

— Would you help him if you had the opportunity?

— What?! Well, you're asking questions! I would...

— And when he helped you, did he have this opportunity?

— Well, accordingly! What kind of questions?

— So he helped you because he had the opportunity. And you didn't help him because you didn't have the opportunity. Right?

— That makes sense, – the interlocutor wrinkled his forehead.

— Then where does the feeling of guilt come from?

— Where from indeed?

— And how appropriate is it in this situation?

— Totally inappropriate.

— You said it yourself. I completely agree with you.

— Let’s raise a glass to the New Year, guys, – Kirill’s interlocutor raised his glass.

— And for brotherhood?

— Let’s do it, – Alexander agreed.

They laughed some more while the glasses clinked, and Alexander got ready to leave.

— Well, that's it, guys, thanks for the company, Happy New Year again!

— Alexander, I hope Seryozha will get home today?

— Me too. Thank you, Kirill.

— For what?

— You know yourself. Call me if anything happens, – the interlocutor said as he left.

After he left, the friends sat in silence for a minute.

— Is this the one I thought of? – Stanislav raised his eyebrows.

— That's him. Alexander Alexandrovich. Why have you become so quiet?

— Out of respect. When you find yourself in a cage with a tiger, be quiet.

— Oh, come on, we're all our own.

— And again you look like someone?

— Someone saw themselves again, – Kirill objected.

— He told you that you look like a friend, but he doesn't look like a friend, as far as I heard.

— I wouldn't be surprised if I don't look like his friend at all. He saw what he had suppressed in himself in order to survive. This side of him went into the "shadows", but basically remained a part of him, and he saw it in the image of his friend. Because his friend was exactly like that. In addition, he has an unjustified feeling of guilt towards him. This destructive feeling oppresses him, and he unconsciously really wanted to "work through" it today, and Seryozha would pay the bill.

— So you saved Seryozha?

— Partly, maybe.

— What a cool twisted plot. You're handsome, strong, and cool...

— I am neither this, nor that, nor that, I am just a "mirror", a wonderful opportunity to put yourself in order for those who are ready for it. Sometimes I have a feeling that I do not have my own qualities, there is only what people saw in me, at least this is more important at times.

— Okay, okay, I just wanted to know how to learn it.

— You can't learn. It's a gift you can't refuse.

A young man walked past their table, deliberately close, and, bending slightly, respectfully said, addressing Kirill:

— Hello, have a good evening.

— Hello, thank you. And you too, – answered Kirill.

— Can I guess? – Stas asked, smiling. — You don't know him?

— And he doesn't know me, actually. He made a mistake.

— I also want to be like a mirror...

— You are like a "mirror". You, me and the whole world are "this mirror".

— Why didn’t he say hello to me?

— Well, some reflect more, some less. Next time, someone will say hello to you.

— I have a feeling we’ll get it in the neck today, sooner or later, with your talents, – Stas laughed.

— Easy!

The friends laughed, recalling past dangerous adventures, failures and victories, their mistakes and achievements. They talked about what had changed in their lives over the past year, and what had remained unchanged.

They walked out of the restaurant onto the snowy street. The winter night was white with snow, cool but not frosty.

— Haven't changed your mind about walking? – asked Kirill.

— I want to go for a walk, the evening is very wonderful.

— As you wish. Go ahead then, bro. Happy New Year!

— Come on, brother.

The friends shook hands, hugged, and Kirill plopped into a waiting taxi.

" I'm interested how you found out about my hundred bitcoins for a hundred dollars, Mr. "Remarkable Chance"?" Stas thought, watching the taxi drive away. "I didn't tell anyone about them, not even you... Or is it just a coincidence?"

He raised his head and peered into the falling snowflakes. It suddenly seemed to him that in the stream of stuck snowflakes he saw the smiling face of his friend.

"And actually, I haven't sold any of them yet," he thought. "That means I never had any slaves... And I don't expect to. My dear psychologist. "

The snow melted, falling on his face. Stas took a deep breath of the cool, winter air, felt a very pleasant sense of peace, and walked at a measured pace towards the house, anticipating great pleasure from the walk.